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CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS IN THE MODERN WORLD

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THE COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF SOCIAL ETHICS TODAY

By

Prof. Paul Ricoeur

A. THE QUESTION

I. The attempt at a social ethic in the past

Hitherto we have admitted that the social ethic was a coherent doctrine destined to fill the gap which may exist between Christian preaching and the techincal views and decisions concerning the organisation of society.

In order to fulfil this function of acting as a bridge or a hinge, social ethics tried to create a continuous link between three stages or three levels:

1) Social ethics in the Bible: this heading covered the social views of the Prophets, those of Jesus and the Apostles, those of the Early Church and of the Early Fathers.

At this first stage the aim was to reduce the role of preaching as much as possible and to make use of the resources of exegesis and biblical theology in order to extract some sort of social teaching, principles and values which would be valid for all times.

2) The social doctrines of the Church both in the Middle Ages, at the time of the Reformers, and among contemporary theologians, provided a second theoretical stage. These social doctrines of the Church were in reality obtained by amalgamating preceding biblical principles with the major concepts of social philosophy.

These concepts come on the one hand from antiquity: for instance the ideas of the state (civitas) or of community, Aristotle's ideas of distributive and commutative justice, etc.

Others had been worked out on the basis of the preceding ones, during the Middle Ages. Among these were the different concepts of Natural Law and of the social contract up to the time of Rousseau.

Other concepts spring from the 18th century from the men called "the Philosophers", the modern concepts of the Contract, of solidarity. Lastly Hegel supplied all the contemporaries with historic concepts (alienation, dialectic, rationality and facticity, etc.) We rediscover theological concepts which have been secularised together with a synthesis of rational philosophy.

What is called the social doctrine of the Church in Catholicism is an effort to retain the maximum of mediaeval concepts while rejuvenating them with Hegelian or post-Hegelian concepts. Protestantism has lived usually on a stock of concepts borrowed simultaneously from the Reformation and from neo-Kantism. The liberal theologies have supplied it with very significant amalgams of these different concepts, up to the present time.

3) A coherent view of good and evil (or of the lesser evil) applied to the world-wide social systems: socialism, capitalism, liberalism, collectivism, etc.... It is very often at this third stage that the title "Social Ethic" has been used, blocking (by this moral judgment) the three stages mentioned above. It is at this level that practical judgments have been worked out, in relation to reality and to social practice. Beyond that begins circumstantial judgment based on concrete situations and circumstantial commitments.

"Social Ethics" was thus the name given to the thought, opinion and action which aims at unifying all these, combining the social teachings of the Bible with preaching, with social philosophy and with the judgment of the total phenomena of economic and social life. Thus "Social Ethics" presented itself as a heterogeneous amalgam, whose inconsistencies were often concealed under a flood of formulas, the biblical thought often being expressed in terms of modern "policies", and the concrete judgment applied to definite situations retaining a halo of religiosity to clothe its technical machinery.

The preliminary question is to know whether we should try to improve, to patch and to mend this kind of theoretical formulation, or whether it should be entirely abandoned in favour of something quite different.

II. The break-up of the old approach

It really was not our fault that this traditional approach is now in fragments:

1) As a result of better exegesis and a better biblical theology, the concepts of the Kingdom, of Justice and of Community have been restored to their own context, thus making it more difficult to amalgamate preaching-kerygma and the modern politico-philosophical concepts.

2) The metaphysics which supported this philosophic-theological discourse have been broken.

3) The ideology of the world-wide social systems which often served as fuel for the moralists has itself broken down. We are living in a phase when ideologies are ebbing on all fronts. An ideology is very often merely a refuge for empty phrases, alibis and lies. Society tends less and less to take long-range views or hold long-range ideals; more and more it is tending to solve its problems on a technical basis. Effective intervention in industrial society is becoming essentially a matter for specialists who base their arguments less on great principles and more on the basis of a logical empiricism, through trial and error. Their aim is to adjust regulating-mechanisms enabling the world-wide systems inherited from the ideological period to function empirically as coherently as possible, and thus to prevent crises and break-downs.

The great project of a social ethic is thus split between:

a) a biblical theology which is increasingly close to exegesis and increasingly strange to the whole search for immortal principles or eternal values, and increasingly concerned about finding practical forms of behaviour or the value of witness and signs connected with this teaching;

b) a technicity which is increasingly neutral, increasingly suspicious about principles, values and ideals. The death of the ideologies and utopias deepens the gulf between the biblical "signs" and the regulating "techniques" applicable to the economic and social mechanisms.

What is to be done? In my opinion we are no longer - or not yet - living in an age of great syntheses. For the moment any complete doctrine which was absolutely coherent would be an illusion. My view is that we must proceed by a method of approximation or convergence. On the one hand we must seek the points (discontinuous, mobile and varying with the times) at which preaching can be inserted into the social reality. We must see where we have some foothold, and where we can go forward. On the other hand, we must base what we do on the existing work directed towards well-determined points, and try not to make them into a system, but to see what affinities exist between them.

B. LOCATING POINTS OF APPROACH

In order to get a clearer view I shall take as my starting-point two points which are diametrically opposed.

1) At the one extreme I think it can be said that today mankind is the sole subject of history. Scripture speaks of man as a generic being: the Creation, the Fall, the Redemption are concerned with man: "Thou hast created him a little lower than the angels", etc. (This should not close our eyes to the fact that Scripture also speaks of nations and people, of individuals whom it names and whom it calls. We shall revert to this later.) But this is the first time in history that it is possible to give a content and a meaning to this project. The destiny of mankind is the sole subject which underlies all our discussions about the hunger in the world, about the atomic menace, about de-colonisation, about the search for a world order, and perhaps most of all about what Perroux calls "the generalised economy". Now this unity of mankind will not come about automatically; it does not function like a cybernetic machine which corrects itself and keeps itself in repair. This great purpose is pursued across what I will call the pathology of this generic being. We recognize its signs. At the very moment when we are thinking in terms of humanity, the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer. A few great powers claim to decide the destiny of the world by dividing their influence. National sentiment consolidates and flares up. The ebbing ideologies break up the economic rationality at the level of the great international exchanges. Rivalries and prestige-politics put the brake on the world-wide economy of needs. I therefore think that our action and our social thought must be polarised by this desire to concentrate upon the needs of mankind as the all-embracing concern in each particular project.

2) At the other extreme I perceive another task: the need to "personalise" the relations in industrial society which are becoming abstract, anonymous and inhuman. In this case we must approach social ethics from the other end. What counts here are practical actions carried out through small, effective groups. The struggle against de-humanisation in the great urban conglomerations, in the psychiatric hospitals, in old people's homes, etc. supplies us with the model for what may be called a "personalizing campaign". As in the case of the preceding action, this campaign constitutes a utopia: the opportunity for everyone to develop to the fullest extent. I can readily understand Spinoza's words: "The more we know about individual things, the more we know about God." As I see it, a social ethic is not based on a system, but on a paradox; it is concerned with two opposite things: on the one hand mankind, on the other the individual person. I perceive the importance of both. If both of them could be attained fully and without contradiction, it would be the Kingdom of Heaven. There are therefore two motives for social ethics, one of which concerns the community, the other the individual.

3) On the basis of this polarity, can we direct our course in the meantime? Between mankind as a whole and the individual person, what is there? The question is a strange one, because the whole of social life lies between these two poles. We must not let our minds become obscured by judgment on the ideological level. The exercise of critical judgment on the level of the great social systems (capitalism, socialism, etc.) is legitimate on condition that the ideology which they quote as their authority is not separated from the effective practice of real relations between real people. So what really matters is not so much the abstract right to own property, but real power and its exercise by real groups. Moreover, we must always compare comparable things, and not the actual form of one system with the ideal form of the other. I think we ought to re-examine all our analyses of socialism in order to get a proper perspective for our judgment. I think our approach to the systems should be a very concrete and practical one, in view of our twofold aim: mankind as a whole and the individual person.

Now how is one, as a "Social Christian", to tackle the intermediate local or regional scale units such as the large-scale enterprise, the industrial branch, the plan, the Common Market, etc.? I realise that these are the essential questions in the social problem, but they are also the most difficult. I see questions such as: to what extent do technology and automation in economic-social regulations exclude a moral judgment? At what point can an ethical judgment be brought in? When we formulate it, to whom do we address it? Who hears it, who can receive it and apply it? Here the question, where to begin the problem, becomes serious. On what can one rely? We are either in danger of over-estimating the automatisms and their neutrality with regard to all moral judgment, or else (on the other hand) of not recognizing (through moralistic naivèté) the determinisms on which we can act. The question seems to me to concentrate on the crucial point of decision. It is at the point where the decision is made that the human considerations can be applied. Thus the decisions made by the planner present a threat to a concept of man, his needs and his destiny.

How far can we take the reflections arising from the polarity of mankind and the individual and to what extent can we regard this as a certain criterion? For instance, shall we say that "the good" is both that which increases communication and multiplies responsibilities? Was it not said in the past that wealth is bad because it destroys community, because it confines and because it isolates? Consequently the conditions for a moral judgment on social affairs should be sought not on the technical level but on the level of motivation: what kind of man do we want to make and what kind of man are we actually making? Questions of this kind help to guide us in forming an opinion about the reform of business enterprise, planning, the union of Europe, etc.... But this question about the kind of man we want and the kind of man we are actually making shows us that we should pay more attention to the actual relations between people than to the systems often alleged or claimed.

THE PROBLEM OF COEXISTENCE AS A "COVENANT OF LIFE AND PEACE"

Statement to the Second All-Christian Peace Assembly (Prague) 1964

By

Archpriest V. Borovoi

"My covenant is of life and peace" (Malachi 2,5). That is how we testify to Christ, and His Church and to ourselves today; that is our good tidings to all men who long for life in peace and in conditions of freedom, justice and equal dignity for all.

If our testimony is to be convincing, and our message effective, they must be concrete, real, objective, and in line with the pressing demands of the time and the requirements of contemporary humanity.

In view of this, we must be outspoken, honest and sincere as we face the future. We must set aside pious rhetoric and outdated scholasticism which have nothing in common with the present day. Pope John XXIII.provides a compelling example of such realistic testimony and concrete understanding of the contemporary scene.

We must shun the boring reiteration of well-worn truths and tedious, general declarations which are not addressed to anyone in particular, lack of constructive and objective definition, and have no real chance of being implemented in practice.

Our conversation on the Divine Covenant of life and peace and our Christian testimony to the modern world can be fruitful and useful only if they apply to real life.

This was well put by the prior of the Community at Taize, Roger Schutz. "Our present generation craves for truth. It abhors all half-truths and Christian Pharisaism. It does not tolerate artificial solutions. That is why it is extremely necessary for us to bring the concreteness of the contemporary world situation into the warp and woof of our Christian life." (Die Zeichen der Zeit, 1963. No. 4, p.122)

Neglect of concrete realities has become Christianity's historical tragedy.

"From ancient times.... a critical moment, both extremely tragic and highly dangerous, has been taking shape and gaining an edge in the history of the whole of modern Christianity", writes the outstanding French theologian Yves Congar. "It is the gap, conflicting with the Gospel and the whole of the Holy Scriptures, between the first and second parts of the greatest commandment: between the love of God and the love of man, between theology and anthropology. That is why there are still some who have small care for the sufferings of others, the sufferings of the world, so long as the ritual of divine service is maintained.." (Y.Congar, "Le Salut, Qu'est ce que c-est", Témoignage Chrétien, 1959, No. 777)

This idea was expressed with compelling force by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said: "Our Church has been struggling all these years only for self-preservation, as if it was a goal in itself, and has become incapable of being the bearer of the Word of reconciliation and salvation for men and for the world. That is why its former sermon proves powerless and goes unheard."

These words of the great German theologian and confessor ring as strongly for us as they did for men of his day.

This basic Christian reappraisal must inevitably pay special theological and practical attention to the forgotten anthropological and cosmic aspects of our soteriology.

What is important for contemporary thinking is not only a sense of salvation of the individual human soul but of humanity as a whole; salvation on the scale of the whole planet, even on the scale of the whole cosmos. Here is a typical excerpt from the meditations on the subject by Yves Congar (in a series of his articles on modern faith in the popular Catholic journal, Témoignage Chrétien):

"Many people today have a sense of confusion when faced with the idea of salvation, which appears to be incomplete, narrow, when confronted with the anthropological insufficiency of the formula which is very noble in other respects: 'The Saviour of souls....' And what about the bodies? Many retreat with a feeling of resentment in face of a petty individualism, as it appears: I have nothing but a soul and I want to save it. The idea of a cosmic, total salvation, and solidarity in salvation of one and all, keeps coming back in one form or another. We must come before the face of God together. It couldn't be that some would come to God alone, without the others", writes Charles Peguy. (Y.Congar, "Le Salut, Qu'est ce que c'est?" Témoignage Chrétien, 1959, No. 777)

These and other similar questions and reproaches are being heaped on Christianity and Christians, theology and the Church, today (see for instance the interesting and extensive collection, Kritik an der Kirche, Editor Hans-Jürgen Schultz, Freiburg 1958). The questions are innumerable and we must all admit that there is justification for this criticism.

It is our common and sacred task, as Christians and participants in the All-Christian Peace Assembly, now meeting in Prague for the second time, to make a contribution to the great cause of the All-Christian ministry in the reconciliation of humanity. That should also be the purpose of our discussion on the subject of "My Covenant is of Life and Peace."

If anyone should question our right to interpret God's Covenant as a covenant of Life and Peace and to apply it so universally in time and extent, relating it to our contemporary problems, the best answer would be the example, practice, and consciousness of the early Christians. In complete accord with divine revelation and the divine plan of salvation, they regarded themselves as the New Israel; they were conscious of being the children of Abraham, and the true inheritors of his covenant with God, the new "chosen people", and applied to themselves and to the Christian Church all the pertinent sections from the history and prophecies of the Old Testament, because they, and consequently we as well, were the "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9), from whom "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). The entire history of the first ages of Christianity and all the works of the Fathers and teachers of the Church are full of examples of just this kind of universal interpretation of the Old Testament. To deny this right for us, or to question the validity of our coming discussion on the Covenant of God as the Covenant of Life and Peace only on the strength of the fact that the Prophet Malachi, in his own historical context, used these words to refer to the covenant of Levi and addressed them to the priests of the Old Testament is to deny the same right to early Christianity, and to question its whole history.

We must not be confused by the complaints of the faint-hearted and the skeptics or the rebukes of the embittered opportunists who say our movement, dedicated entirely to the defence and strengthening of peace among men, has departed from the pure spheres of Christian faith and is a tactical compromise with "non-Christian secular forces" which pursue their own purely political purposes and have nothing in common with the Church and Christianity.

It is true that on questions of preserving and strengthening peace, friendship and the brotherhood of men, we speak a common tongue with all men of good will, regardless of their religious, political, social or philosophical convictions or commitments, and are prepared to cooperate with all in everything that brings or can in the future bring good, reconciliation and unity to a suffering, divided, and erring mankind.

If this is a deviation from pure Christian faith, the same deviation was made by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical "Pacem in Terris", when he proclaimed: "Who can deny that these movements (non-religious, pursuing economic, social, cultural and political purposes) insofar as they accord with the rules of prudence and are an expression of legitimate aspirations of the human personality, can contain elements that are positive and deserve approbation....Meetings and agreements in various temporal spheres between believers and non-believers may prove to be occasions for learning the truth and paying respect to it....For these reasons it may happen that the rapprochements or meetings of a practical order which were yesterday considered to be untimely or unfruitful, have on the contrary become today, or may become such tomorrow". (Pacem in Terris, Encyclical Letter, Vatican, 1963, No. 41) Is it not this to which we call all Christians through our Conference?

If this is a deviation from the faith, the same is true of the words of Cardinal Montini (the present Pope Paul VI) in 1951 in his speech to mark the 250th anniversary of the Papal ecclesiastical academy. Concerning the diplomacy of the Church, he said: "From formalistic protective constructions of the past, diplomacy must pass to its truly modern mission, that of broad positive concepts. If it had been possible in the past to boast of the art of protecting the interests of one's country or one's organisation in the spirit of rivalry and juxtaposition with other countries or social movements, today the truly good diplomat is the one who is able to propose the broadest, most univeral programme, a programme that would benefit all the sides concerned. The objective conditions of the modern world in which we live are such that the best, the superior diplomacy is the one that creates and puts forward projects for an international Modus Vivendi without safeguarding the interests of its country or group only (which is hopeless and very harmful), but presenting solutions which are comprehensively appplicable and beneficial to the common weal and are based on unquestionable and generally accepted values". (Wien, 1963, N. 7-8, pp.5-6)

Is our own movement not dedicated to these purposes? What could be more vital and beneficial to all men? What is so general and universal as the longing for peace and peaceful coexistence, the fraternal and amicable coexistence of men living without violence and threats in conditions of liberty, justice and respect for human dignity?

If this is a depature then the same step has been taken by the World Council of Churches, whose Third General Assembly in its Message to the churches appealed to all Christians as follows: "We must learn to make our Christian contribution in serving all men also through secular organisations" (New Delhi). Surely our own Conference calls for, and wants to, implement this same message.

We can repeat boldly the words of Pope John XXIII, who replied very simply and honestly to such charges of "departure". He said: "Some say that I have gone too far to the Left. However, I must be a father to all men."

The Church must bear witness to Christ and minister to all men, and not to some single group or movement. The Catholic philosopher and founder of the well-known magazine Esprit, Emmanuel Mounier, wrote of such conservative "zealots" and "accusers" "We demand that they cease smuggling their policies under the name of Catholicism, that they should stop imposing on the Church their own political line because the Church embraces all believers." (Emmanuel Mounier, Esprit, No. 159, September 1949, "De l'usage du mot 'catholique'")

These "zealots" are deeply involved in purely political activity in favour of their own narrow ultraconservative concepts, but raise a great wail when the Church tries to follow the path of independent co-operation with all men of good will. When this happens, they call it "politics" and flatly refuse the Church the right to be true to its mission of ministering to all men in these matters.

Thus, the Catholic publicist Rudolf Kraemer-Badoni of West Germany, wrote in Die Welt, after the publication of the encyclical Pacem in Terris, as follows: "I address myself to Pope John who sits on the venerable throne of St. Peter, with the following warning: you are abusing your dignity politically; you have taken a path leading to the final undermining of our will to ensure liberty, which is weak as it is; you want to save the Church at the cost of our freedom. You have no authorization from us to conduct such a policy. Leave that path." (Rudolf Kraemer-Badoni ... Wiez, 1963, No. 7-8, p. 12) Whose freedom did Pope John XXIII jeopardize? Whose freedom was jeopardised by the independence and universality of the Church and her "salvation" (to use the terminology of these men)? The overwhelming majority of mankind welcomed Pacem in Terris. All men of good will whether belonging to the Church or not, express solidarity with our All-Christian efforts to serve the great cause of reconciling humanity and consolidating the peaceful co-existence of all men. It is clear that the only thing this jeopardizes is the liberty of political gambles undertaken by handfuls of men like Mr. R. Kraemer-Badoni. It jeopardizes their liberty because they stubbornly refuse to look at present-day realities and continue to regard the Church and Christianity as pliable tools in their hands in the fight for the status quo wherever the new is relatively weak, or for the return of the old wherever the new historical processes have already matured and won out.

What these men forget is that although the Church as a historical institution often did actually play a protective part in respect of the established official social order, in its internal essence, as the great Catholic thinker Emmanuel Mounier said, "Christianity is not a brake; it is great zeal, it is a force inexorably bringing change and progress." (Qu'est ce que le personalisme? 77-78)

The correct answer to the relationship between Christianity and politics depends on the interpretation of the word "politics" and on the "politics" in question. Mounier says that Christianity is called upon "to form the spirit of politics but not to direct politics". (Feu la Chrétienté, 1948, Oct. p. 159) Speaking about Christian political parties, he underlines the fact that their rapid development in Europe is not a sign of any Christian revival but rather of a "tumour formed on the ailing body of the Christian world", for..."the Christian Democratic parties set up to liberate the Christian world from ties with reaction, by a strange quirk of destiny, are gradually becoming the best refuge for it." (Feu la Chrétienté, p.10-11, 1946, May. Agonie du christianisme) Much too often "defence of freedom" spells out support for social conservatism, and "defence of democracy" means defence of the Christian Democratics' conception of it.

It is quite another matter when Christians serve the reconciliation of men, not in the interest of certain political parties, but in the name of fulfilling their duty of testifying to Christ and serving peace. Such a policy does not divorce us from Christ but is a direct fulfilment of His commandments. This is very clearly explained in the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Faith is in touch with reality, because the concept of the Church and the concept of reality run through all his theology in equal measure. The Church and reality, the Church and the world are not two opposites which call for some compromise agreement; concentration on the Word of God and side glances at the reality of the world. The Word of God embraces the reality of the existing world as well. That is why the Christian is not a man of "perpetual conflict". His immersion in the world does not separate him from Christ, and his Christianity does not separate him from the world. While belonging wholly to Christ he stands simultaneously fully and entirely in that world. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kritik an der Kirche, 316)

Our Christian Peace Conference stands on such a foundation and it can be accused of departing from the purity of faith, for supporting the idea of peaceful co-existence of all men only from the standpoint of narrow political passions, but not from that of faith itself.

Another question that repeatedly arises during the course of our discussion and may have a negative effect on the strength of our Christian testimony in the world and, in particular, on the work of our Conference, is the question of the Christian philosophy of history, the maximal historical optimism and doctrinaire illusionism of our movement, the so-called "abuse of the Gospel" for so-called "unilateral political purposes", the gap between our theoretical theological substantiations and our concrete political decisions, the so-called "short circuit" or the leap across the gulf between our theology and our policies.

Lack of time will not permit me to examine these very serious problems in full.

First of all it must be pointed out that these questions are facing other movements as well. They are the concern equally of all Christians and all schools of human thought. It is not our duty alone to answer them. It is the duty of all Christians, and we are prepared to have a real dialogue on all these topics.

The Christian Peace Conference has no special philosophy of history or special brand of theology, for it is not a monolithic religious and philosophical system or theological school.

Orthodox and Protestants, Catholics and Anglicans, and representatives of the "Free Churches" take part in our movement with equal success and constructive effort. We cannot have a single theology because we belong to different churches, faiths and denominations. There are, after all, different theological schools and trends within one church and within the bosom of the same confession.

Among us areChristians from the Socialist and the Capitalist societies, from East and West, from the NATO and the Warsaw Treaty countries and the so-called non-aligned countries. In a word, our Conference reflects all the political and social diversity of the contemporary world. Clearly we cannot have a previously worked-out unity of ready-made political views with which to assess the complex and contradictory international events. But what we do have is unity on principles of Christian faith and morals, and singleness of good will which enables us to enter into a free and sincere dialogue on the common platform of an All-Christian testimony and ministry for the reconciliation of warring humanity and the establishment on earth of the peaceful co-existence of men, peoples and states with different political and social systems.

It is on this platform that we can find a common tongue and enter into dialogue and constructive cooperation with all men of good will, regardless of their religious, social, philosophical or political views. The future of Christianity can only gain from this.

As for the Christian philosophy of history, the religious significance of the peace of Christ, the spiritual concept of the Kingdom of God and eschatological events: whatever the answer to these questions, or the view taken of these problems, it cannot in any way have a negative effect on our Christian duty of ministering to reconciliation, or prevent us from making joint efforts aimed at establishing peaceful co-existence among all men.

In short, the existentialist negation of history cannot in any way slow down or weaken the reality of the historical process. All disputes on the meaning of history and Heilsgeschichte may be excellent material for a discussion like the one launched by the Ecumenical Institute on the meaning of history, or the one recently planned by the World Council of Churches on the subject: "Jesus Christ as the Final Goal in the Age of Universal History", but they cannot prevent men from making history. And if history does go on it largely depends on us what direction it takes, whether it is to be a Heilsgeschichte in the spirit of the Kingdom of God or a "philosophy of absurdity", in the sense of brotherhood and peaceful co-existence of all men, or of the spirit of hostility, division and constant danger of conflicts, violence and war.

As for the short circuit or the inadequately substantiated "leap" from our theological foundations to our concrete political decisions, that is a common phenomenon among all Christians, and, in fact, among all men who try to deduce from their own beliefs concrete directions for all occasions. We should not be confused by this nor fear it in any way. There has never been and never can be complete concurrence of integral theological maximalism with practical relativism and the pluralism of current and fluid political situations. Jean Maritain, the author of Integral Humanism, explained such pluralism as follows: "Due to the process of differentiation, which is in itself a very normal phenomenon, the secular or temporary order has attained in recent times complete autonomy and as such appears parallel with the spiritual or sacred order. This is an essentially historical movement, and it is the task of the new Christian civilization to preserve it. This does not at all imply a negation of the priority of the spiritual order....From the religious standpoint, I should of course like every one to believe in integrity, the organic wholeness of the Christian truth. But from the social-temporary standpoint I should be quite satisfied if the Christian forces working in society should bloom among some with the fulness of supernatural faith and should at least retain a moral dynamism among those in whom they continue to exist (even if they do not realize this), but have become more or less secular". (J. Maritain, De role du principe pluraliste en democratie, Wiez, 1958, No. 6)

Maritain's conclusion is altogether optimistic. He expresses the confidence that "in a free competition the leaven of Christianity will play an ever greater role" (ibid). It remains for us to accept this conclusion of the Catholic philosopher and not to be discourged by any such things as "short circuits" and "leaps" in the sacred cause of ministering to reconciliation.

What is more, the time factor and our own possibilities should be reckoned with, as in the parable of the ten talents. This was very well expressed in 1959 by the Catholic priest Jacques Loew, when he wrote: "I often recall the parable of the talents with a slight variation. Initially we Christians had a great wide field for activity. It was as if God had given us ten talents so that we could acquire

ten more. But as development went on, the number of talents diminished. God left us five, three, and now apparently only one talent. However, if this single talent is left to us we shall have to give an accounting of it as we should have had to do of the ten talents." (J. Loew, "Fin de l'expérience des pretres ouvriers", Nova et Vetera, 1960, No. 1)

It must be vigorously pointed out that we shall lose even this last talent if we do not continue to connect the aspects of eschatological works and the purely spiritual understanding of the peace of Christ with our concrete duties as Christians in the contemporary dynamic, changing and highly tense international situation.

None of us denies the significance of eschatology and the spiritual understanding of the peace of Christ and the Kingdom of God for our theology and our Christian ethics, but we are faced with concrete political problems fraught with the danger of a world cataclysm and of suffering for millions of our neighbours. These misfortunes of the present day and the future are the business not only of us Christians but equally of millions of other people who are neither Christians nor believers. This is a matter of concern to all men, for the whole of mankind, and demands swift, vigorous and concrete action. One may have a great interest in the problems of eschatology, a most lofty and purely spiritual concept of the peace of Christ as the human soul at peace with God, one may work to establish the Kingdom of God in one's heart, but without effective ministry to the reconciliation of mankind all this will be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1), and will in no way help our brothers the non-Christians and non-believers to ward off the danger threatening the world, nor to overcome human grief, tears and sufferings. "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish." (I Cor. 8:11)

Those who love to delve into the eschatological dimension in history and engage in scholastic debates on "Fulfilment in history" and "Fulfilment of history" would do well to face up to reality as it is described by a Spanish priest Luciano Rincon, the editor of a Catholic magazine, who once paid a visit to the slums of Madrid with a group of young theologians. The group made a thorough study of life in the Madrid suburbs and what they saw shook them to the depths of their hearts and made them feel ashamed for their erstwhile theological academism and eschatological wisdom. He writes: "We came there for training. The bulk were young men, student priests... We were satisfied with ourselves. We were priests, we were intellectuals. This was admirable. What hopes, what a future! We were very pleased with ourselves... We are humanists in the life-giving font of simplicity. The return to the Gospel... We know everything: Christ said this, and Christ said that....meanwhile, there in the slums, Christ said to us and repeated it again and again: I was hungry, and you did not feed Me....I went into the inexpressible sufferings of the suburbs... My Body was torn asunder by the poisoned thorns of Spain, whose ostensible Christian orthodoxy nullifies the very life of Christianity... I wept with tears of blood over Spain of the extravagant luxury and the horrible poverty....over Spain the tragic and the merry-making...I was a beggar and was despised...I was thrown into the refuse bins, like the refuse of humanity, and I was forgotten among those who do not even count....When Christ repeated these words over and over again, we, the great posers of apostolicism merely murmured in confusion: Lord, ...we have organized the charity lottery and here it could be added: Lord, we shall comfort these Thy poor with an abundant portion of eschatological hopes and learned statements about historical events and parousia." And Luciano Rincon concluded his terrible report with the only correct and possible conclusion: "We are the defeat of Christ, we, Christians. The cross, as we had been taught, is suffering and defeats. The suburbs of our capital are veritably sufferings and defeats. Forgive us, Lord, us who have the temerity to attend holy liturgy every Sunday." (L.Rincon, in Informations Catholiques Internationales, 1959, No. 92) For this the priest Rincon was arrested and put in prison.

All of us who are gathered here can merely repeat the prayer of this courageous and sincere priest who learned from his own experience that in the name of our eschatological aspirations we must above all, now, here, on earth, wage a struggle against oppression and hunger, and this will be our best testimony to Him about the "historical events and parousia". He realised that for the sake of the Kingdom of God we must do everything to save the lives of people and that this would be the best example of our peace with God and perfection of Christ's spiritual peace within us.

We should not be discouraged by the fact that the ideal of the Christian moral perfection is boundless and the demands of our ethic maximalistic. We must do what we can, to perform the minimum common to all men, leaving our Christian maximum for our personal improvement.

"It is we who perform our works", says one French priest, "but wherever we are merely present with love, Christ is present there to a much greater degree". (Animation spirituelle de la jeunesse ouvrière. Témoignage d'un aumonier JOC Masses Ouvrieres, 1958, No. 145). And we must not demand that our participation in the life of society, our influence on international affairs should necessarily have the externally ecclesiastic, sacramental forms. We must look at the root of things, because we are not the servants of form but of truth. "Admiration is the first duty of the Christian in respect of any truth, regardless of its origin." (E.Mounier, Feu Chrétienté, 1946, May, p.24)

Such an approach will help us to collaborate with all men of good will and this can do nothing but benefit our faith and our testimony to Christ.

There is also the question of our so-called "one-sidedness". Is it good or bad? That depends on the interpretation we put on this "one-sidedness". Our Conference is open to all views and trends, and everyone who comes to us is on-sided in some respect because he has some preference for certain views, which he likes, or which he considers to be correct. That is as it should be. What would we be doing here if we had no definite outlook, convictions and views? That is a good, correct, "one-sidedness" because we have many such "one-sidednesses" in content and direction. That is the one-sidedness of each of us as individuals, but we are many-sided as a whole, as a sum total of many and diverse one-sidednesses. These, our proper individual one-sidednesses, are our points of departure in our quest of common solutions. In this quest there is room for all views, for a dialogue with those who think differently. This is a free and frank dialogue. We invite all to take part in it, we are prepared for it, and we impose no views on anyone beforehand. Is that one-sided? Can this be interpreted as something bad (dictatorship, lack of free discussion, etc.)? There is nothing of this, and so there is no problem at all.

Take at random some excerpts from press reports of the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors of Non-Aligned countries in Colombo on March 26, 1964, on the agenda of the next Conference of their heads of state:

1. Guarantees of territorial integrity;
2. Problems of divided countries;
3. Colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism;
4. Racial discrimination and apartheid;
5. Settlement of all conflicts and disputes by peaceful means, without resort to force or threats, in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter;
6. General and complete disarmament;
7. Complete prohibition of nuclear weapons tests;

8. Establishment of atom-free zones;
9. Prohibitions of the manufacture and the destruction of nuclear weapon stockpiles;
10. Question of military pacts, blocs and foreign bases and troops on the territory of other countries, etc.

Is all this one-sided? Who dares accuse the non-aligned countries of being one-sided? But that is just what we Christians have been proposing to discuss and to implement.

Take the resolution of the World Council of Churches welcoming the Moscow Treaty banning nuclear tests, and the one on the future steps in disarmament adopted by the Central Committee at the Rochester session, and also the resolution on these matters adopted by the Executive of the W.C.C. at its session in Odessa.

Is that one-sidedness? After all that is the same thing we are discussing here in a fraternal and free spirit, and we are calling for its implementation.

Take the encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, some of the speeches by Pope Paul VI, and some speeches by the fathers in the Vatican Council. Is that one-sidedness? It is exactly what the Christian Peace Conference is proposing, sometimes even in more general form.

Finally, here is something else I want to say about this notorious "one-sidedness"

Here I am, an Orthodox priest from the Soviet Union, who has largely based his report on "Western" material which comes from Western social, theological and philosophical thinking, and examples from Catholic and Protestant authorities and the teaching of Western sociologists, who are frequently very far removed from, and even hostile to, everything "Eastern, Soviet, Socialist". I have used this material to show that the best theologians and Church leaders of the West, the brains and honour of Western society, arrive at the same conclusions as we in the Christian Peace Conference, and understand the Christian contributions to the burning problems of the day as we understand them.

This is not at all surprising, because our movement is not an artificial superstructure over and above the political combinations of the "Eastern bloc", as some say, but a Christian movement which sprang from our deep sense of the fact that it is organic for our churches and the whole of Christianity to minister to love and to reconciliation. Our movement is essentially and potentially an All-Christian one, not an Eastern Socialist one, and all Christians will realise this sooner or later. The sooner our Western brethren understand it, the greater will be the success of our All-Christian, peace-making, endeavour.

Of course, there are many difficulties facing the Christian Peade Conference, but we must go forward to meet them boldly, mindful of the fact, as the great German theologian and our sincere friend Hans Iwand has said, that Christ does not stand at theback of history, but acts in history, acts with us, and acts not only in us Christians, but in all men, including those who have no knowledge of Him or deny Him. Using the Barthian term "co-humanity", it should be said that all men are brothers, not only in terms of anthropology or ponerology but of soteriology as well.

The message to the Churches of the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches puts it this way: "We live in a time of change which works great alterations in every sphere of human endeavour. Christians are aware that God is the

Lord of History. That is why the critical questions of our day are not beyond the bounds of His love and that is why they are not all beyond his Power."

We believe that our peace-making efforts in whatever sphere we apply them, whether in the framework of our communities or of our churches, in the sphere of regional Christian organisations, or in the orbit of the World Council of Churches, whether it be in alliance with men of other faiths or non-believers, or finally, whether it be in our Christian Peace Movement, all equally serve to bring out in the world the will of God which is always good, acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2) and equally bear the imprint of God's love for each man of the universe. But we should be spiritually blind if we failed to see the same imprint of Divine Love and mercy also in the peace-making endeavour of our non-Christian and non-believing brethren. And it is here that we find a remarkable prospect opening out before our Christian unity, our Christian testimony and our Christian ministry through our co-operation with all men of good will, with all social circles, organizations and movements which set themselves the noble tasks of promoting international peace and human progress.

We note here with profound satisfaction that the idea of peaceful co-existence is gaining ever wider recognition from men of good will with every passing day. This recognition springs from their conviction that peaceful co-existence is the only reasonable form of international relations in the present-day conditions of the existence of states and whole systems with different social and political orders.

This recognition affirms that only peaceful co-existence is capable of ensuring the progress and welfare of all the peoples of the earth, because only with the sincere and steady desire for peace on the part of all states can the vast amounts now being spent on mutiplying and improving armaments be shifted to productive economic competition, and consequently to the production of material, cultural and spiritual values which are so vital to all of us and which are still lacked by millions of men.

As a natural corollary to this axiom there is the need to put an end to the absurd and dangerous arms race. The continued stockpiling of lethal weapons does not in any way promote negotiations or serve the interests of peace, despite the false assertions of the advocates of the theory of "nuclear deterrence", "nuclear containment", "balancing on the brink of war", etc. On the contrary, it is fraught with countless calamities and privations for mankind at the present time and with the dangerous possibility of global conflict and universal catastrophe in the future.

Obviously the best and most radical means of avoiding this is general and complete disarmament under strict international control. However, in view of the complexity of the problem we should not wait for it to be finally resolved but should work to implement other important measures which will even partially reduce the danger of war. The Moscow Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was a good example of such partial solutions, as was the agreement on the non-use of cosmic space for military purposes, the reduction of military budgets and restriction on production of fissionable materials, recently adopted by some states.

Profound approval must be given to the resolutions adopted by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at Rochester (August 1963) and the Executive Committee in Odessa (February 1964), containing the proposal on further steps and measures aimed at achieving general, complete and controlled disarmament and relaxation of international tensions. The transition from the cold war rivalry to peaceful co-existence, and from peaceful co-existence to constructive cooperation and competition in the sphere of welfare, culture and progress is the only correct

and only possible line of human development for all of us. There is no other way out, for in this age of the conquest of the atom and of outer space, an age which opens up before humanity unprecedented technical and scientific prospects, to live means to live together.

And if this is so, then it is only common sense to realize that there should be recognition of the axiom that no outstanding international issue today can be solved otherwise than through painstaking and reasonable negotiations, with good will on either side, and readiness to make the necessary mutual concessions, which, however, do not encroach on state sovereignty, honour and dignity of the countries concerned.

Peaceful co-existence does not imply some utopian attempt to achieve complete accord in social and political views or ideology. The urge to discover an indivisible truth, to witness to it before others, and the efforts to make it triumph over delusions and erroneous opinions is one of the manifestations of the human spirit as an individual and a member of society, that is, one of the conditions of man's freedom on earth. It is not only his legitimate right, but an inescapable fact of the personal, family, social, state, cultural, spiritual and political life of men.

Christians cannot abandon the truth and yet witness to it, they cannot compromise in matters of faith, by substituting or weakening its entire absoluteness and integrity for some sort of religious and philosophical syncretism or eclectisism. There are not two truths and we are absolutely and firmly convinced in our faith in the divine truth of the God-man who was incarnate and became a man and lived among us, and revealed to mankind the whole truth and said of Himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Thus, the differences of ideology and the struggle of the ideologies to testify to the truth so that it will triumph over delusion are the natural and legitimate facts of our Christian, and equally of human, history. They are our right and our duty. If we insist on this right and duty for ourselves, we cannot deny the same to those whose beliefs differ from ours.

All this notwithstanding, honest and forthright ideological struggles and competition have nothing in common with the interference by some states in the affairs of others, and cannot be regarded as obstacles to peaceful co-existence.

Peaceful co-existence implies sound friendship between peoples, extensive co-operation among all countries in various spheres of science, technology, economy, culture, and also sincere, selfless assistance on the part of the economically advanced and rich countries to the economically undeveloped and needy countries.

We believe that the joint efforts of men of good will towards general and complete disarmament, the establishment of exclusively peaceful settlements of outstanding issues in relations between states, the abolition of all forms of oppression of the human personality and of peoples, and the final establishment all over the world of the principles of peaceful co-existence and cooperation of men and nations will bring nearer the much-desired victory of a stable and just international peace.

Let us therefore continue our good work, "being steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58)

DYNAMIC SECULARISM

By

M. M. Thomas

Wise statesmanship and certain facts of national existence enabled India to accept the idea of the secular State. It has been kept alive by three political factors conditioning the character of the Indian State.

First, with the attainment of independence and the nation's decision to opt for parliamentary democracy, the State came to be the organ of a national community which included the total population occupying the territory of the Indian Union irrespective of their religious differences. The Preamble to the Constitution fully expresses this in the nation's resolve "to secure to all the citizens (a) justice, social, economic and political; (b) liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, and (c) equality of status and of opportunity." The Constitution further spells out these principles in its declaration of Fundamental Rights which are justiciable and in its Directive Principles of State Policy. The Government of the country is based on all these principles taken together. So complete separation between State and Religion, guarantee of freedom of belief to every citizen and non-discrimination between citizens on the ground of religion become concomitant factors.

Secondly, with independence, the reorganisation of the traditional structure of society to conform to the political economic and moral ideas of modern life has become inevitable. Society everywhere has a traditional base, but in freer societies it gets modified through legislation to enable it to meet the changing needs. One characteristic of Indian society is that social institutions, laws and customs, have the sanction of religion and have been more or less static. Traditional Hindu institutions like caste and joint-family and customs like child-marriage and prohibition of widow remarriage, have all been considered inseparable from Hindu religion. Therefore, for the realisation of social and economic justice the separation of the social structure from religious sanctions became necessary. This process was hastened by the influences of the democratic political institutions, industrialisation, mass media and other forces of modernisation which broke down the isolation of the villages. As the main lever of all national activity to ensure the welfare of all, and more especially of the scheduled castes and other traditionally backward sections of the people, the State is compelled to move in the direction of revolutionising the traditional structure of society. Promulgation of social laws has become inevitable.

Thirdly, the minority religious communities whose identity and cultural freedom have to be protected and promoted, have to be assured of their right to establish their own educational institutions, and of non-discrimination in the matter of state aid to run them.

Our democratic policy has to keep all the three factors mentioned above in balance in the implementation of the secular concept of the State. The word 'secular' is not used anywhere in the Constitution. But the fundamental rights defined in Part III embody the secular idea in the following manner:

(1) The State accepts no established religion. It may be added that there is no Article forbidding the establishment of a State religion, similar to the provision in the U.S. Constitution.

(2) Equality of treatment for all religions is guaranteed, the State being forbidden to show any preferential treatment of any particular religion. The State is forbidden from compulsory taxation of citizens for the maintenance or promotion of any particular religion and from providing religious instruction in any educational institution run by the State.

(3) The State assures absolute freedom of belief to every citizen. Freedom of conscience guaranteed, by necessary implication, includes freedom of unbelief and freedom of thought in other matters such as political, social or economic doctrines.

(4) The State guarantees all citizens freedom to express their beliefs by overt acts and to propagate such beliefs, and every religious denomincation has the right to manage its own religious affairs without interference and establish institutions for religious and charitable purposes. However all these rights are subject to State control in the interests of public order, health and morality. The State is also authorised to provide for social welfare and reform and regulate or restrict any secular activity associated with religious practice.

The Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Minority and Adoptions Act, the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Acts and the more recent Anti-Dowry Act are a few outstanding enactments placed on the statute book to effect necessary social changes. The promulgation of these statutes has been in the exercise of State's powers in the field of the religious practices, which hitherto claimed a vast expansive jurisdiction. The question whether such legislative interference with traditional religious practices would not violate the concept of Secular State and the right of religious freedom has been quite often considered by the Supreme Court and the High Courts in the country. The Courts have justified the role of the State in such conflicts between the traditional and the modern concepts of social justice and have upheld a progressive interpretation of the secular concept. Decisions of the Courts regarding protective discrimination in favour of socially and educationally backward communities in the matter of reservation of seats in educational establishments and public services, necessitated an amendment to the Constitution itself. The State has assumed more powers to legislate on protective discrimination. It may be added here that no uniform criteria have been adopted regarding the applicability of the doctrine of Protective Discrimination to converts from Hindu Scheduled Castes. The third aspect of the idea of Secular State has been dealt with by the Supreme Court in their advice to the President of India on the Kerala Education Bill sponsored by the Communist Government. The Court, while upholding the right of the State to enforce reasonable restrictions in the running of the educational establishments of the minorities, also maintained the right of minorities to receive recognition of their institutions and aid without discrimination.

The institutional expressions of the State in the implementation of the secular concept show that the State, while maintaining religious liberty of the plurality of religions and its own separation from any particular religion, has been seeking to beat back religion to its proper place. By separating the social structure from religious hagemony the State wants to maintain the integrity of the secular spheres of life. The residual area that will be finally left to religion without interference from the State is still to be ascertained. It is this dynamic aspect of the secular concept in India that distinguishes it from that of the United States, where the concept is being implemented on static norms and in clearly defined areas.

Secularism and the Crisis of the Spirit

The policy of freeing the State as well as large areas of social and educational activities of the nation from the control and sanctions of particular religions has achieved a great deal for India. It has brought a large area of common life under the rule of law in which citizens of all religious communities may cooperate for common ends. It has released the individual from traditional customs and made personal freedom more real to him; and it has brought about a climate of opinion more conducive to economic development and social justice. The creation of the physical framework and the intellectual atmosphere for nationalism, democracy and social development are by no means a small contribution of Indian Secularism. But has it been able to consolidate its gains emotionally and spiritually? Clearly no. It is here that nationalism, democracy and socialism face a real crisis.

Loss of National Integration and Integrity - The working of the concept of secularisation through the institutions of law has not achieved the objective of emotional integration of the people as a free healthy national community. The fourteen years of our existence as an independent nation show that in spite of our considerable gains in the physical goals there has been substantial loss in national integration and integrity. Progressive narrowing of loyalties has been noticeable all along. Communal riots, election victories of communal parties, growing influence of R.S.S. among refugees and Hindu intellectuals, language riots in Assam, rising tide of irrational occultism at various levels and areas affecting decisions are among the many instances of it. When society goes to pieces the individual too goes the same way. There has been considerable loss of moral fibre. National property is destroyed at the slightest provocation. Favour, not desert, is regarded by many as the key to success. The very fact that charges of corruption are often made and easily believed prove that something is really wrong with the body-politic. There has been a growing tendency to acquiesce with evil. Fear in many forms is seeking to re-enter national life and corrupt it. Selfishness on a national scale has increased considerably and people who have in the past suffered for a cause today seek to cash their sacrifice for personal gain. At every level there has been a tendency to shirk responsibility and to leave things for other people to do. Democratic elections too have become an erosive force. Even democratic political parties find themselves exploiting communal and caste fissures in society, and slogans devoid of any economic or political content are successfully used to woo the voter. All these are manifestations of deep conflicts created by the process of secularisation without building up an adequate alternative spiritual base. The idea of secularism and the new structures which it supports do not inspire in men and women the same loyalty as the traditional religious attitudes and communal institutions. In any struggle between them the latter is stronger and invariably wins. The traditional symbols, images and gods are emotionally satisfying and infuse a certain devotion and militancy in the modern Indian who finds the secular culture and its ideals morally acceptable but spiritually rootless and emotionally powerless. The symptoms of this may be grouped under two categories: (a) The middle class who are expected to lead the nation's peaceful emergence as a classless society, which process requires considerable discipline and possible hardship on their part, have been exhibiting a growing resistance to play their historic role. Their sullen resistant mood is reflected in their subtle but effective opposition to large-scale agrarian reforms, in their perching on seats of power in the industrial field without considerations of either efficiency or healthy trade unionism, and also in their role in exciting the masses on mere communal and parochial slogans and shibboleths. There are prophecies that the working of our concept of "mixed economy" benefits largely the parasitic upper class and that ultimately the "have-nots" for whom the economy is sought to be run may throw up the whole experiment as alien to their interest. In the field of values too no revolution has been brought about and

manual labour is still looked down upon. Masses of people continue to be separated from the upper classes by artificial barriers. The fear of the consequences of social change seems to be growing. (b) In the field of law and legislation the crisis of secularisation is more evident. Formerly law had its basis in concepts of justice, commonly shared by the community. Punishment derived its significance as expiation of a transgression against accepted norms. But what foundation does law have today? What is the social structure that is sought to be protected? The conflicts created in this field have resulted in widespread evasion of law and disrespect towards it.

A Crisis of the Spirit - What is really happening in India is a crisis of confidence which is the direct product of a crisis of character. Nationalism after attaining its limited objective lost its momentum and is no longer a sufficient cohesive force for social change. The concept of nation as an economic unit is not yet grasped. So the old loyalties are re-emerging. Social anthropologists say that in our anxiety to modernise society and to introduce secular concepts which themselves represent a living law, we have not taken into account the living law of our society which has been family-centred and caste-centred and not nation-centred. Our social ethics have been heirarchical and non-egalitarian. So when we combine the ways and values of an egalitarian modern society with those of our traditional one, the living norms of these two types involve us in incompatible loyalties. The result is that our experiments tend to weaken traditional institutions and values without being effective themselves. Consequent upon the rootlessness resulting from the breakdown of unified structures a quest for meaningful community begins. Failure has been dogging our footsteps in this field of providing significant community ties and in reinterpreting values and goals in answer to the questions: "what is society?" and "who is my neighbour?" Nehru bewails: "We drift not knowing whither we are going. The younger generation has no standards left, nothing to direct their thinking or control their actions." As for the intellectuals who ought to give a lead "many of them do not even seem to realise the nature of this problem, others suffer from a crisis of the spirit, not knowing where to turn."

Alternatives - Certain distinct forces and ideologies have sought to fill the vacuum in the Indian society and to deal with the deep spiritual struggle involved in the problems of social change. The militant communalism of the majority community spear-headed by the R.S.S., the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Maha Sabha and its defensive counterparts in the minority communities represented by the Muslim League, the Sikh Akali Dal and others enjoy a strong position. Similar is the position of the Communist Party. Both Communalism and Communism have some clear ideas of what the country should be and have simple and understandable answers to the question, "what is society?" The exclusive concern of the communal parties with the culture of the particular communities they purport to represent destroys nationhood and democracy and also tends to make them on the whole conservative and incapable of moving with the times. The Communists claiming to be scientific humanists have in practice rejected all scientific empiricism. In the name of class-struggle they have encouraged the lawlessness of caste, linguistic, regional and other sectarian fanaticisms, wherever they have had political strength or have been in control of the State machinery. Competition and struggle no doubt have their place in democratic social development; but when these are followed without reference to the common good, they too like the communalists destroy the basis of nationhood. Moreover, in following a thorough-going materialism, Communism denies the rational and spiritual foundations of the State which by becoming a law unto itself invades the freedom and integrity of the citizen's reason and conscience in the name of power-politics. For these reasons, both Communalism and Communism must be rejected as spurious answers to the spiritual crisis of Secularism.

Renascent Hinduism is a more genuine attempt to give spiritual foundations for Indian Secularism. It is the ideological resource of Sarvodaya and allied movements and their powerful lobbies in the Congress, the Socialist and more recently the Swatantra parties. It points to the recognition of a divinely-ordered dharma or moral order as the only stable basis for the "welfare of all" which is the goal of all national efforts. This no doubt is a move in the right direction, but the inadequacy lies in the definition of dharma. Equating dharma with the traditional "farm and family", Sri C. Rajagapalachari seeks to protect them from change and builds up a political theory of unrestricted private enterprise; and on its basis the Swatantra Party takes its stand against all social and economic planning. The serious attempts of the exponents of Sarvodaya to integrate social change with our indigenous philosophical principles of satya, ahimsa and swadeshi show their keen awareness of the crisis. Their insistence on a discipline of moral values and their conviction that change can be brought about through persuasion have really enriched the processes of secularisation. However Sarvodaya exhibits its fundamental weakness in trying to stem the tide of science and technology in its scheme of values and programme. Any social structure that does not equip the community to fit in with the age of modern science will be hopelessly inadequate. Facts of life cannot be denied and technological advance represents the most revolutionary factor in modern life. Sarvodaya offers village self-sufficiency in place of industrialisation, and party-less democracy as a solution to the problem of power. An exaggerated notion of the divinity of man as part of the Spirit blinds it to the fact that irrational forces can have powerful sway over rational human beings, and that even well-intentioned actions of men may hide self-interest. So it is that Sarvodaya philosophy cannot grasp or nourish democracy's institutional checks and balances against corruptions of power. The doctrine of Toleration itself has been worked up as an ideology so as to become identified with a syncretistic outlook, in which essential differences fail to get tolerated. So Sarvodaya cannot grasp the role of democratic structures providing for dialogues between opposite points of view leading to better realisation of truth. Its too dualistic outlook on matter and spirit which makes proper appreciation of technology impossible its over-emphasis on the goodness of man which leads to a denial of both the necessity and corruptability of State power in the ordering of society and its concept of toleration which places a premium on agreement without any dialectical encounter, pose continuing problems in the development of an adequate philosophical basis for a new state and society.

If Hindu renaissance has not so far provided an adequate indigenous cultural foundation for social and political realism for modern India it does not mean that further attempts should not be made. In fact, the reinterpretation of indigenous religious cultures with a view to providing the basis for India's secular State and democratic nationhood remains one of our most vital needs.

Towards a Synthetic Philosophy of Secularism

Neither abhorrence of materialistic secularism, its depersonalisation of the human being and its denial of spiritual values, nor a crusade against change with the cry of "religion in danger" will satisfy the challenge of the times we are passing through. Rapid growth of secularisation in more and more areas of life has become both inescapable and necessary. It has become inevitable because science represents a basic living law and masses of people can enjoy the values of freedom and community by more and more technological advance. By deliberate withdrawal of areas of thought and life from religious and metaphysical control and by its attempt to live in these areas in terms which they alone offer, scientific secularism contributed considerably to the enlargement of human freedom.

Secularisation has become necessary since it provides the basis for common humanity and citizenship in our culturally heterogeneous and class-conscious society. This is not to minimise the dangers involved in the process of secularisation. The danger lies in carrying secularism to the point of rejection of the religious nature and destiny of man, resulting in the creation of an ideology or outlook in total exclusion of the divine structure of reality. The very human person it seeks to save becomes enslaved in its prison house. In our times Communism is the example of extreme scientific secularism devoid of a spiritual foundation. The dynamics of change require a synthesis of the positive and beneficial values of secularisation and the concepts and beliefs deeply embedded in our culture.

The Indian concept of the many-sidedness of truth postulates the dignity of the human person. If all persons have the capacity of knowing at least partial truth, it follows that all should be given their due share of respect and dignity. The positive attitude towards social change also emanates from this conception of truth. The world itself is in a constant process of change. So constant efforts are required to be in touch with reality. Gandhiji's exhortation that even God comes to the hungry man in the form of bread and the concept of Daridranarayana contain truly positive elements to build up economic ties by instruments of democratic consent. Above all, the strength of India has been the acceptance of unity in diversity. Indian culture was always composite. Rejection and denial have not been her approach to reality and India suffered whenever she lost sight of this fundamental truth. The different strands in her culture contributed by Harappa, Dravidian and Aryan sources and latterly by the Arabs, the Pathans and the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British bear ample testimony to this. Today science and technology represent a living law and have obliterated distances and all artificial barriers. Our concept of values and beliefs are resilient and receptive enough to be enriched by the incorporation of new elements of scientific secularism from many corners of the world.

Democratic political parties have a great role to play in the growth of such a positive discipline which is ever open to and effective in nourishing the diversity of our different cultures and which is conscious of the continuous search necessary to maintain a progressive equilibrium that transcends the barriers that divide us. The role of the great religions in this task may be more hidden than open. That is, in modern India the contribution of religions will lie more in the formation of the spirit, mind and conscience of the human person involved in the institutions and structures of secular life rather than in their direct control of those institutions and structures; more in giving to secular culture a dimension of spiritual depth and ethical awareness than in building up an avowedly religious culture. The participation of religions in building up the foundations of common citizenship on the basis of human values enriched by science and technology may itself provide the necessary corrective to purge religions of their unrealistic ontological outlook and divisive attitudes. In turn this partnership in nation-building with the great religious traditions may enable science and technology to surrender their false autonomy to the reality of a divine structure of social life and values.

FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF EVANGELICAL SOCIAL ETHICS

By

Prof. Hendrik van Oyen

In the first part of this paper (see Background Information No. 32) we have considered three types of Protestant approach to social problems:

1. the theology of society based on Christian natural law (Wendland) against the background of the Social Gospel.
2. the trend which moves on from this basis to the existential subjectivisation of the personal epoch, Gogarten, Grisebach and Løgstrup; and
3. the trend which, under the impulse of Barth's concretissimum of the Heilsgeschichte, regards reality as sacramentally integrated by the law of God.

All three attitudes have in common an attempt to escape from static, metaphysical projections of actual questions, and to relate these to decisions based on faith, and to understand and elucidate them (whatever their individual mutability, mobility, openness and modernity) in the light of the single message of Jesus Christ, the message of atonement through crucifixion and resurrection as the guarantee ("arrabon") of the coming Kingdom. The flexibility of social decisions and the flexibility of faith seem to be easy to coordinate, since they are both shaped by their indeterminacy and their contingency. Each has its peculiar focus: to exist in this world and to exist in reality. We cannot in this connection speak of two Kingdoms which proceed separately (this was not Luther's view either). The figure of an ellipse is more appropriate. In other words, while for the believer reality in its totality is a reality which is subject to the rule of Christ, this confession of faith also includes the knowledge that what the New Testament calls the "cosmos" stands over against his rule. Precisely when we proclaim that Christ is Lord, we know that inherent in this "cosmos" are apostasy, sin, denial of God, being a law unto oneself, secularism, and the worship of man and of his achievements. The centre of gravity on this side need not really be the state or technology; it is man in his solitude and his self-righteous dominion. The one focus of the ellipse is the law. The other is the new man in Jesus Christ, the Word which builds and sustains the Church in the world of promise and of the first fruits, towards the world to come and which will finally bring that Church to its true home.

It must, however, be added that the categories formulated in the perspective of natural law and Christian natural law are not genuinely biblical ones. Neither freedom nor responsibility, nor even the person, are biblical forms of speech. The word "freedom" is specifically used a number of times by Paul, to indicate redemption from sin. But what really should be used, where modern theology employs the word "freedom", is "the action of the Holy Spirit". Responsibility is a completely modern idea which emerged only in the 19th century. In biblical terms, the word that comes to mind is "sanctification".

The idea of personality, too, is completely unknown to the Bible. "Liphne JHVH" is what is meant in the Old Testament: standing within Heilsgeschichte before the face of the Lord, being commissioned and mandated by Him; and the concrete manifestation of this is Koinonia - participation in the Body of Christ. If we try to free social-ethical problems from the spirit of philosophy (and especially from idealism) and revert to strictly biblical language, it looks as if the first thing we must do is to realise afresh the variety and the infinite dynamism of the biblical message. We are confronted by a "pluralistic universe" (Noordmans) and not with a streamlined machine (as the systematic German spirit would have preferred in order to have everything neatly catalogued). In my writings I have tried to stress the Trinitarian dynamism of God's Word, and have specially avoided the metaphysical rigidity of systems and laws derived from the concept of natural law. My intention will, I hope, be illustrated by a few points.

(a) I should like to avoid speaking of mandates or of "orders of Creation"; what we have to deal with in the Bible is the idea of man's receiving a mandate from God. Man is God's steward in the world (imago dei = this being commissioned). The danger is thereby avoided of linking the "mandates" together (as Bonhoeffer does) by an a priori law of "above" and "below".(14) We cannot, however, allow anthropology simply to be absorbed in christology (as is the tendency in Barth). Precisely because God calls us through His Word to make this earth our home as His stewards, and to respect this earth as His gift, room must be left between man's stewardship of these gifts and Christ's action as our Advocate before God. Man's activity with his various tools, accepted as gifts of God (reason, physical strength, will-power and so on) is thus always an encounter with one's fellow-men which has many aspects; these cannot be reduced to the common denominator of "God's law of grace". The different aspects of this stewardship cannot be inferred Christologically: the roles of man and woman with one another cannot be derived from the nature of God, nor the State from the kingly rule of Christ. I believe that we should rejoice in the gifts of God, in the infinite variety of the manifestations of His love. In the erotic sphere we rejoice in God's gift whereby we can discover each other as man and woman. In the professional sphere we rejoice that we can experience the fulfilment and affirmation of our capacities. We rejoice in the field of the philia in the fact that there are forms of law and protection, and of mutual coordination and compensation. We rejoice that there are decisions in the world which the world does not understand, that spring from the love of Christ as agape, bursting through the ordinary and everyday, all the rigid and boring elements in life, like a miracle, like a dawn of the new Kingdom.

We therefore regard the doctrine of Creation as an affirmation of our "natural" humanity, from the point of view that God takes His works seriously - not merely with the intention of sustaining them until the Last Judgment. In the midst of our joy about the earth, sorrow breaks out over a world broken by sin.

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(14) Hans Dombois, Politische und christliche Existenz, in Macht und Recht, 1956, p. 142

It is only when we encounter the Word in Christ that we understand what it means to be a sinner, and to have to regard this earth as a lost world (Kosmos) in the eyes of God, as a fallen creation. We must therefore make a sharp distinction (in accordance with the biblical usage) between the earth and the world, between joy over the earth and sorrow over the world. But only through Jesus Christ does it become clear to us that this sorrow is in effect guilt that "man" is immersed in guilt, even if he has not been instructed by the word of the Gospel; that he lives in sin, even if he perhaps can still only rejoice naively over the earth, or suffer from the mysteria iniquitatis inherent in the earth (possibly in order to test mankind), in accordance with the scheme of Creation.

(b) At this point, we can deal rather more fully with decisions taken in the framework of society. In the first place, we must consider our acceptance of the different gifts of God, which impel us to make distinctions between them, and not to reduce them to a common denominator - this acceptance forces us to differentiate, to be aware of subtle and graduated differences between certain modes of behaviour. An eschatological perspective of the fulfilment of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ throws light on our behaviour to one another. In theory, the life of the Church should proclaim the new Kingdom, like a city on a hill, not only by preaching the Word but also by translating it into action. Martin Buber demands the Word expressed in action from a Church reconciled with God. In theory, this is perfectly correct. In practice, we are still living in tension towards "the Future of Him who came", so that our actions reflect all the brokenness of the present aeon. From this point of view, that "theology of society" (which is based on a projection of divine ordinances subsequently distorted, daemonised and corrupted by sin) appears as a failure to appreciate the real state of affairs; that social structures are not guided and controlled by mythical figures but by men who have incurred guilt towards both God and neighbour.

We should not regard the autonomous laws of actual problems as "dynamic powers" which corrupt social institutions. The real state of affairs, in the light of the Gospel, is surely that we men in our fear of existence, in our lack of faith in the real care and guidance of God, allow ourselves to be pushed into the focus of human autonomy and of human dominion. The great problem confronting Nietzsche was his realisation that man may declare God to be dead and imagine that he is free, but why does he then impose a law on himself and thus make himself unfree? Decisions in the social sphere are thus fettered by human autonomy, those very decisions which we all take and in which we are also steeped in the comprehensive solidarity of guilt and unbelief. Even the Church of God, instead of being a city on a hill and a redeemed community, is so deeply committed to this solidarity that its actions have again and again to be related afresh to God's commandment. It can never be automatically assumed that a Christian will act in a "Christian way". First of all he must make a great effort to overcome himself and consciously visualise a different perspective - what a really Christian gesture would be. In that case, the pure act of faith has already again been frustrated. Løgstrup is right in asserting that the commandment is silent, and cannot be deduced from the act itself. The tragedy of Christianity is that it has to switch deliberately from the everyday moral and legal approach to something entirely different. The fact that I have to give

myself a push in order to act like a Christian shows how little our anima is naturaliter Christiana, and also that conversion does not take place at a fixed point in time.

(c) Yet we may affirm that morals and laws are gifts of God which are not to be despised, nor merely rejected as sinful and daemonic in the context of social life. "Panta de euschemonoos kai kata taxin ginesthoo" ("Let all things be done decently and in order") wrote St. Paul in his Ist Epistle to the Corinthians (I.Cor. 14:40); that is what he asked of the Church as a general rule for its behaviour in the world. Here the Christian has to face those moral and legal demands which are made of everyone, whether Christian or not, and which appear in the form of specific virtues and ideals: freedom, justice, brotherhood, human rights, etc. In this connection Oldham has spoken of "middle axioms" - not perhaps a very happy distinction, but one which is unavoidable in practice. It tries to point to the ground on which the Christian meets the non-Christian in socio-political affairs, and is compelled to work with him on the basis of common assumptions - and simply to accept these as they stand. In this connection Karl Barth has spoken of horizontal (as opposed to vertical) ordinances of life. I prefer the expression philia because it includes the idea of love, of grace as "chesed". This is not the case with the "middle axioms". As Yoder(15) has rightly pointed out, the "middle axioms" are not criteria to be set side by side with love; they are merely the form in which the demands of the moment are "translated" into the concepts of the other man - the non-Christian.

This is a special problem, and to my mind it is very doubtful whether in this case (as H.D. Wendland thinks) such "axioms" are necessarily derived from natural law. This does not seem to me to be the case. The lex naturae is rooted in a metaphysical, ontological way of thinking, its ordinances must be considered as microcosmic presentiments of the Macrocosm. Through his intelligence man reproduces and unveils the mysteries of God's creative power. When we speak of cooperation between Christians and non-Christians in the many socio-political fields of life (as a form of the philia) we are talking of their joint efforts to strengthen and extend those aspects of society which have proved their worth in history. Philia has a quite explicitly historical form, as could be demonstrated by numerous examples. Man's feeling for what is right rests on a polarity between the objective regulation (as laid down in the legal code) and his confrontation with the particular case to be judged. The "right" decision is not the one based on the expediency of the moment - that is the law of force of a dictatorship. Nor is it merely the rule which has been accepted in history and confirmed by practice: da mihi facta, dabo tibi ius. The "right" decision is sought as real justice, based on historical precedent (it is true) but also taking account of the concrete case. A right decision, therefore, comes about in three stages: regulations, responsibility and decision. The regulations need not be based on the lex naturae, but may have emerged as positive law in the course of a people's history, because something has over and over again proved to be right. A right decision goes beyond regulations in order to opt for human community. This is not to advocate any ontology of law, nor does it simply derive law from the justification of the sinner, as the law of grace, for secular law cannot permit itself (merely by the iustificatio impii) to remove the barriers against injustice and crime.

(15) D. Bonhoeffer, Ethik 1949, p. 224 ff.

Thus, even if here too, there is a gift of God (closed), His greatest gift would be to reintegrate the condemned man or woman into the community for reasons of agape, through spiritual care by the Church and by individual Christians. The aim is that the condemned man or woman should share in the fullness of love. This means that through this love he or she will discover the mystery: that Christ has suffered in his place.

This then is the category which seems to us to be decisive for action based on faith: the essence of the biblical ethic is not responsibility but, as we said, sanctification, and the most profound factor in sanctification is substitution. The divine gift of Creation is not that we discover cosmic laws as our own (lex naturae), but that we understand that we are dependent on each other in our various relationships, that we are answerable for each other. Love as agape is the deepest mystery of creation (the logos which became flesh). Parenthood means being answerabl for one's children and taking their place when they are unequal to the situation. As a mother said to her son in the war: "If you are brave, I shall be proud of you; if you are not, I shall still be your mother". The relation between man and wife should be such that each can take the other's place. The same applies to the relation between employer and employee, and between ruler and ruled. As Calvin put it: God has appointed the magistrates so that they shall be subject to the people whom they must serve by ruling them. The problems of "Protestant social ethic" emerge at this point of responsibility for one another; it is when they are confronted with Christ that they come sharply into focus. For everything connected with the order of the philia is still not substitution. They are rather forms of equality whereby the rights of everyone are safeguarded equally. The idea of suum cuique (to each according to his due) is still no substitution. We can nevertheless be thankful if this idea takes shape to some extent in the world. But the missionary message of the Church to the world is that of mutual responsibility, through the indwelling of the spirit.

In the Church, Christ is present as love which "seeketh not her own" (I. Cor. 13) i.e. which does not calculate and become embittered, but "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things".

I should like, if I may, to discuss what I have meant in my previous remarks in terms of two topical questions - the problem of "property" and the problem of "authority".

(a) The problem of property has attracted considerable attention from the Church in recent years. Some have advocated a broader distribution of property, the paying of wages partly in the form of shares, and a fairer distribution of possessions. I am thinking particularly of the Memorandum published by the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany on "The formation of capital in a responsible society". It advances many weighty arguments in favour of the right to own property and the moral obligation to look after what one has acquired. It discusses various measures which might result in a more equitable distribution of wealth, while avoiding inflationary trends. I do not wish in the least to question all this. I merely wish to state that a form of cooperation between governmental, economic and Church authorities is thereby envisaged, where everything is thought of in the framework of the philia as a concern for order designed

to ensure mutual respect. But there is a New Testament perspective which was not sufficiently stressed in that Memorandum. At most this is vaguely touched upon at the beginning, where is stated: "Man, with or without property, is called to take his place in the freedom of the children of God", - unless we read between the lines, e.g. the affirmation by Walter Kuenneth that property provides the basis for life and action by a free personality, at least in principle.(16)

In the sight of faith, however, what is to be said is that property for the disciple must always be considered in terms of the epousion. Everything over and above the epousion should be queried. The sacrifice of personal property suggested by Christ is certainly not prescribed as a law. That would be completely pointless, since (in the sight of faith) property is to be managed only in a spirit of stewardship - the willingness to step in and help others with one's possessions. In recent Protestant theology property threatens to become a sanctum for the dignity and freedom of the personality, and that idea, in the report referred to above, seems to be not entirely wide of the mark. Stewardship, however, calls for teschubah in connection with everything that we possess, that is an opportunity to become free and not to be weighed down by earthly considerations. The 'epousion' is a lack of possessions which is biblical, and is by no means to be dismissed as of secondary importance or as deliberate asceticism. Property, in the eschatological perspective of agape, is a dialectical relation: "Having nothing and yet possessing all things." (II. Cor. 6:10). As epousion it is the abundance of God (Ex. 16:11 ff. the quails in the wilderness) and the poverty of what God regards as sufficient for us.

Theologically speaking, therefore, property is relativized in light of the Coming Kingdom. This is made clear in I.Tim. 6:5 which refers to men who "think religion should yield dividends", and which points out that "of course, religion does pay high dividends, but only to the man whose resources are within himself". ("Estin de porismos megas he eusebeia meta autarkeiss") Poverty is thus a great gain if the believer knows how to receive what is given to him by the hand of God. The riches of God and earthly poverty go together. If the Gospel is to go out into the world as an effective missionary force, the Church must know something of this poverty by showing that the property-owner is not possessed by his property, as is customary in the world. Of course, it is not possible to impose poverty as a law upon all mankind, and the campaign of the Protestant Church in favour of a fairer distribution of property is entirely justified. But it is also necessary to stress that a right understanding of property is not fulfilled only in the discussion of a just social order. Thus Trillhaas is quite right to make the point in his ethnics: "The Christian doctrine of property does not culminate in an economic ethic".(17) This becomes clear if the question is looked at from the aspect of stewardship. A theology of society as a general theory of Christian humanity will not be able to take account of this category. For it is impossible to formulate a law out of it.

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(16) J. Yoder, Von göttlicher und menschlicher Gerechtigkeit, ZEE 1962, p. 166 ff.

(17) Die Denkschrift des Rates der EKid: Eigentumsbildung in sozialer Verantwortung in Luth. Monatshefte, 1962, Junge Kirche 1962, No. 6

"Poverty reminds us that there is something more important than earthly possessions" (Trillhaas)[18] The Christian Church should really begin to live according to this principle. Unfortunately, the Church must again and again prod itself awake to think carefully about it. For "according to the world" there is no room for this attitude. It is the irruption of the new aeon.

(b) This brings me to my second example: political action. The locus classicus the 13th chapter of Romans, by no means offers us a theory of state and authority such as would enable us to erect a kind of metaphysics of the State, and lay down a priori which authority is Christian and which is not. Nor are we discussing the view that the word exousiai refers to the angelic powers. I would translate the word simply as "authorities" or "local authorities". Recent research, particularly the outstanding work of Strobel[19] has shown convincingly and in detail that in this section of Paul's writings he uses the administrative language current at the time, and hence that he cannot have intended to expound an official theory of state and "authority". In this whole section, beginning with Romans 12, Church members are urged for the sake of the grace of God to sacrifice their bodies as their logice latreia. The apostle is well aware of the tremendous tension under which the Church must go on living in the old aeon. But the Christian's mind is to be transformed, so that he does not react impatiently and angrily to the blows and trials of the world, but waits to see what the acceptable and perfect will of God demands. For the end is near (Romans 13 ff.); "the night is far spent; the day of the Lord is at hand" Ho kairos will awaken us out of our sleep. "He nux proekopsen he hemera eggiken."

It is in this perspective that we must regard the concrete exhortations to conform to the taxis of the authorities, not to do anything criminal, but to do good, pay one's taxes and so on. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I. Cor. 14). These are all straightforward, concrete directives how to behave to the powers-that-be, regardless of who they are. There is no talk of Christ in this section. Any Christological interpretation here seems to me to go wrong, because the only thing which can be understood as a gift of God, for Christ's sake, is the grace which underlies the "taxis" of the political-social sphere. But a theological justification of the State by a sort of analogy with the lordship of Christ seems to me to be very far-fetched indeed. There is a broad concrete realm in the preaching of the New Testament, where the Church can serve the "powers-that-be" faithfully and willingly ("fideliter atque libenter", as the second Helvetic Confession puts it) without being obliged to adopt a theory of the State which postulates its foundation on natural law or its development through historical determinism. The fides between the subject and his superior is the proper behaviour - loyal good faith. It is rendered above all to authorities who really try to place themselves at the service of the people; but it must also be rendered for as long as possible, even if the authorities seem to fail in many respects. The subject must keep telling himself

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(18) W. Künneth, Rechte und Pflichten des Kapitaleigentümers nach der evangelischen Sozialethik, in Eigentum und Eigentümer, p. 112

(19) See, E. Wolf, Eigentum und Existenz, ZEE, 1962, p.1 ff.

that even a legitimate "just" authority is something human and can be beset by many faults (pressure groups!). Moreover, from a Christian point of view it is not possible to give a precise definition of a just authority, for to do so would involve the projection of a Christian metaphysic of the State! True, one could conceive of something approaching a trias politica, an equilibrium of responsible forces between the authorities and a pluralistic society, in which connection the so-called "principle of subordination" can be of some help at this point. But the Christian can never define one particular form of authority as being the exclusively Christian one.

This, however, does not mean that there is no limit at which the Christian Church must refuse its obedience to "the powers-that-be". Individual members may, as subjects, retain their loyalty (fides) to the powers-that-be up to that point. But where Christian faith suffers in favour of the glorification of a certain State, "race" or ideology, there arises a limit to their obedience. These limits present serious, indeed tragic problems for the Church. For an unconsidered and overhasty "No" on the part of the part of the Church would leave out of account its own joint involvement in guilt with an authority of this kind, and make it offend against its own profession of faith. Nor can the Church ever demand that the powers-that-be should apply the Gospel message as law. No doubt the entire Christian Church today would whole-heartedly welcome atomic disarmament in view of the menace which nuclear arms involve for humanity, both now and for the future. However, views differ as to whether the authorities can be urged to undertake unilateral disarmament, in face of those powers from which an attack could come. At this point it must be emphasised that mankind cannot go back to the time before atomic bombs were invented. Even if all the bombs were destroyed, the knowledge how to produce them remains, and one must reckon with the danger of an adversary producing them secretly.

For its part the Christian Church, viewing matters from the viewpoint of the Kingdom of God, regards war as a sin, a casus non dabilis; that is something which the Church has constantly forgotten to stress, because it has entrenched itself behind the slogan of the "just war". From the depths of my heart I agree with Yoder when he says: "There is simply no example of a war which the Church has condemned and in which Christians have not fought".(20) In fact, the whole distinction has become academic in view of the present situation. The Church should proclaim that war of all kinds is a sin. Only this view cannot be held up as a nomos to the powers-that-be, and so in the end we usually equate what the Christian does with what the subject has to perform in the execution of his responsibilities. Nevertheless, the question remains: "Why has the Christian Church failed so badly to remember its own message, and to rely on the power of its own Lord who promised that He would be with it?" Admittedly, the Church cannot demand that the State should disarm unilaterally. That would offend against the philia which are valid in the domain of the state - the philia which are based on a balance. Such a demand is valid only

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(20) W. Trillhaas, Ethik, 1959, p. 307

in the programme of an opposition-party (e.g. the anti-NATO programme); as soon as the opposition assumes responsibility no more is heard of the fine programme. Nevertheless, the Church can and must clearly realise that for the New Testament war is no proper instrument, except in cases where international order (i.e. the United Nations) demands that specific police actions promote the cause of peace. In particular, atomic warfare is indefensible, to whatever extent atomic arms are employed. This must be proclaimed by the whole Christian Church in East and West, without any ambiguity. If the Church draws the conclusion that this involves everyone becoming a conscientious objector, it is expressing a vote of no confidence in the powers-that-be. It thereby refuses them its loyalty to help to defend the life of the people. It would turn the Christian message into a law. It is therefore left to the individual Christian to decide whether to refuse obedience as a subject in the name of Christ, and to tread the path of suffering.

In that case the stewardship of the individual Christian would prove its value, where it is not really possible for the Church as a whole to preach revolt, and thereby run the risk of appearing to collaborate with the enemy. Unless, however, in the long run the whole Christian world (on an ecumenical scale) were to reach a single clarity about the proclamation at this point and act upon its convictions in a new crusade: si omnes, nos non. For the time being, this hope seems to be Utopian. Yet the Church, as the Body of Christ, cannot refrain from whole-heartedly seeking to realise it.

Notes on the contents of this issue

Paul Ricoeur is Professor of Metaphysics at the Sorbonne in Paris. His paper is the first part of a statement prepared by him for the study programme of Christianisme Social in France, of which he is president. We are grateful to the secretary of Christianisme Social and to Prof. Ricoeur for permission to publish this extract from his paper.

Archpriest Vitaly Borovoi is the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva. The statement by him was an address presented to the World Peace Conference, Prague, June 1964.

The statement on Dynamic Secularism is chapter 5 of the study book, Problems of Indian Democracy, published in 1962 by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society and edited by P.D. Devanandan and M.M.Thomas.

We publish all these papers in conjunction with the preparatory studies on Theology in Ecumenical Social Thinking for the 1966 WCC World Conference on Church and Society.